

# Branding the Criminal

System of Identification Invented by the Late Alphonse Bertillon, Prevents Old Offender From Concealing Identity, for He Can't Change Measurements.

BY "JOCK" BELLAIRS.

There died in Paris, France, the other day, a man whose service to society outranks that of any other man of modern time.

Yet this man died almost "unwept, unhonored and unsung."

After death this man's brain was weighed, and this brain was found to be of abnormal weight. This fact followed a brief, a very brief, cable announcement to the world that Monsieur Alphonse Bertillon was dead.

Years hence, historians likely will class this man's achievements in behalf of the world in the front rank. Today, the petty sort of a few Mexican brigands command more attention. Such is the homage we pay to men of affairs.

Alphonse Bertillon, the world's greatest exponent of anthropometry, author of the Bertillon system of measurements of criminals, perhaps the mightiest arm the police of the world have to hold down the horde of crooks that unceasingly crop up here, there and everywhere, was given a passing mention in the daily news dispatches when his great brain ceased to urge the organs of life and his heart beats stopped. Yet no general of this or the old world, no admiral, no soldier of war, fortune or of peace, no captain of industry, did more to strengthen society than did this man.

In police circles Alphonse Bertillon is known in every niche of the world. Humanity at large knows of the man because of the system. But what this system is, how it was invented, what good it does, how it became a universal adjunct to every crime fighting organization the laudable sphere over, is as little known as is the science of astronomy.

Alphonse Bertillon was, at the time of his demise, and for a third of a century prior thereto, Chief of Judicial Identification Service of France. His was a mighty de-

partment. Under his direct supervision rested the proper classification of more than 200,000 criminals and upon his shoulders rested the responsibility of being able to identify any or every one of these at the moment's call. And an identification in the old countries, particularly France, means much more than we consider it here. It must be an identification without the slightest particle of doubt. And in these days of aliases, fast travel and a heterogeneous population, day after day, the task was herculean. Yet Bertillon made it easy and his work has given the entire world an absolute control of the criminal situation. Craft cannot measure against the science of anthropometry and its proper measurements. And the world owes Alphonse Bertillon due debt for this.

## ELEVEN MEASUREMENTS TAKEN OF CRIMINALS.

The Bertillon system is generally understood to mean a measurement of ALL parts of the body. Not so. There are but eleven measurements and there is likelihood of error in these. But Bertillon covered these possibilities with so much that the question of error is now not even suggested. The Bertillon system works with the photograph. But the inventor of this mode asks his disciples to analyze each photograph given of a criminal, learn its every line, every mark, reproduce it in the memory so that it becomes a verbal portrait. For, as Bertillon was wont to quote:

"The eye sees in things only what it looks at in them, and it looks only at that of which the idea is already present in the mind."

It may be suggested that the Bertillon system grew out of the use of photographs, i. e., the old rogue's gallery, an institution now almost obsolete. Bertillon entered the French police system when young. He was a student, as are a great number of the old country policemen, and he strove, with others, to better the conditions which handicapped the agents of society in the interminable war against crime. Ideas were suggested by many. Bertillon himself created ideas. None were feasible. He was the first to suggest that the human ear, after a certain age, was immutable, and he wished for a time to have casts or exact measurements taken of the outer and inner ear of each criminal. This might have been a good thing. But it carried with it no means of classifying the criminal. Ten years after Bertillon entered the service there were 100,000 photographs of criminals in the archives of the police in Paris. And there was no means of classifying these. Thus a criminal could give a different name and unless the prison authorities were able to identify him off-hand, it meant days and days of laborious and often useless research to find the corresponding photograph. Bertillon sought a means of overcoming this. He bent his great mind to the work and in the course of time he

evolved the system which now bears his name.

It is based on the three points which Bertillon himself pointed out:

"The almost absolute immutability of the human frame, after the twentieth year of the age. The height only, or to be more exact," said Bertillon, "the thigh bone often continues to grow for two or three years longer, but so little that it is easy to make allowance for it. Experience shows that this small increase is more than compensated for by the curving of the vertebral column, which, commencing about the twentieth year, continues to accentuate itself by degrees until old age."

"The extreme diversity of dimension which the human skeleton presents when compared in different subjects, to such an extent that it would be difficult, if not impossible, to find two individuals whose bony structure is, we will not say exactly identical, but even sufficiently alike to make any confusion between them possible."

"The facility and comparative precision with which certain dimensions of the skeleton may be measured in the living subject by means of callipers of very simple construction."

Then Bertillon gave to the world eleven parts of the human anatomy which his studies indicated never changed. These were:

Height of a person standing; reach, length of the outstretched arms from finger tip to finger tip; trunk, or height of a man sitting; length of the head; width of the head; length of right ear; width of right ear; length of left foot; length of left middle finger; length of left little finger and length of the left forearm.

## MAN, ONCE MEASURED, IS MARKED FOR LIFE.

These measurements are taken in a rigorously uniform way. The French system of measures apply everywhere wherever this idea is in vogue. Thus measures are drawn down to fractions of millimeters. The height is taken barefoot. The reach of the extended arms is registered by use of a "mural graduation" whose centimetric vertical lines are adapted to all heights. The torso measurement is analogous to that of the full height. In the head measurements the expert takes maximum dimensions. Calliper compasses are used. The length is taken from the hollow at the root of the nose to the most prominent part of the back of the head. The width is taken just forward of and slightly above the ears. The right ear measurements are taken on the maximum axis and the soft parts of the ear are not

is taken with a large calliper rule on the big toe side. The middle and little fingers of the right hand are measured at right angles from the joint at the back of the hand by means of small branches of the calliper. The left forearm is measured from the point of the elbow to the extremity of the middle finger, the forearm being bent at an acute angle with the arm and hand extended flat on the table, palm down.

Bertillon classified these measurements or descriptions. He narrowed the figures down to a science so that where a man was once measured, it is the simplest thing in the world for the operator to take the second figures, trace down by

though he guaranteed, years ago, that in the anthropometrical file of 90,000 methodically classified adult descriptions in the Paris Bertillon department, it was impossible to find an exact duplicate within a millimeter.

The average human being speaks of eyes as gray, brown, black or blue. Bertillon gave to the police of the world a chart for the description of the eyes alone and in this there are forty-two combinations. This in addition to defects. He built around his favorite adage that "Nature makes no leaps" and so he furnished each Bertillon operator with charts of the nose, forehead, ears and other parts of the body, together with rules and a 25x-

tem for measuring out defects. Thus, all scars, warts, moles, any defect whatever, are measured and described on the Bertillon card of every criminal. Bertillon gave no heed to the common descriptions.

A pug nose, an aquiline proboscis did not appeal to him. He drew noses with these descriptions—ridges concave, rectilinear, convex; concave-sinuous, rectilinear sinuous and convex sinuous. The Bertillon ear numbers twenty-four, and he laid stress on the forehead whether it was receding, intermediate or vertical. He had noses with the base elevated, horizontal and depressed. Briefly, he allowed nothing to pass unnoticed that might lead to the absolute identification of a criminal. He gave his system, his classification, to the photograph system and strengthened the arm of the law 85 per cent.

The Bertillon system is not the finger print system. Both are used in the great police departments of the world. One aids the other.

It took Bertillon years and years to perfect his work and more time to give it in book form to the world. And it took him more time to convince the world of the worth of the discovery.

## DOUBTING WORLD HARDEST TO CONVINCE.

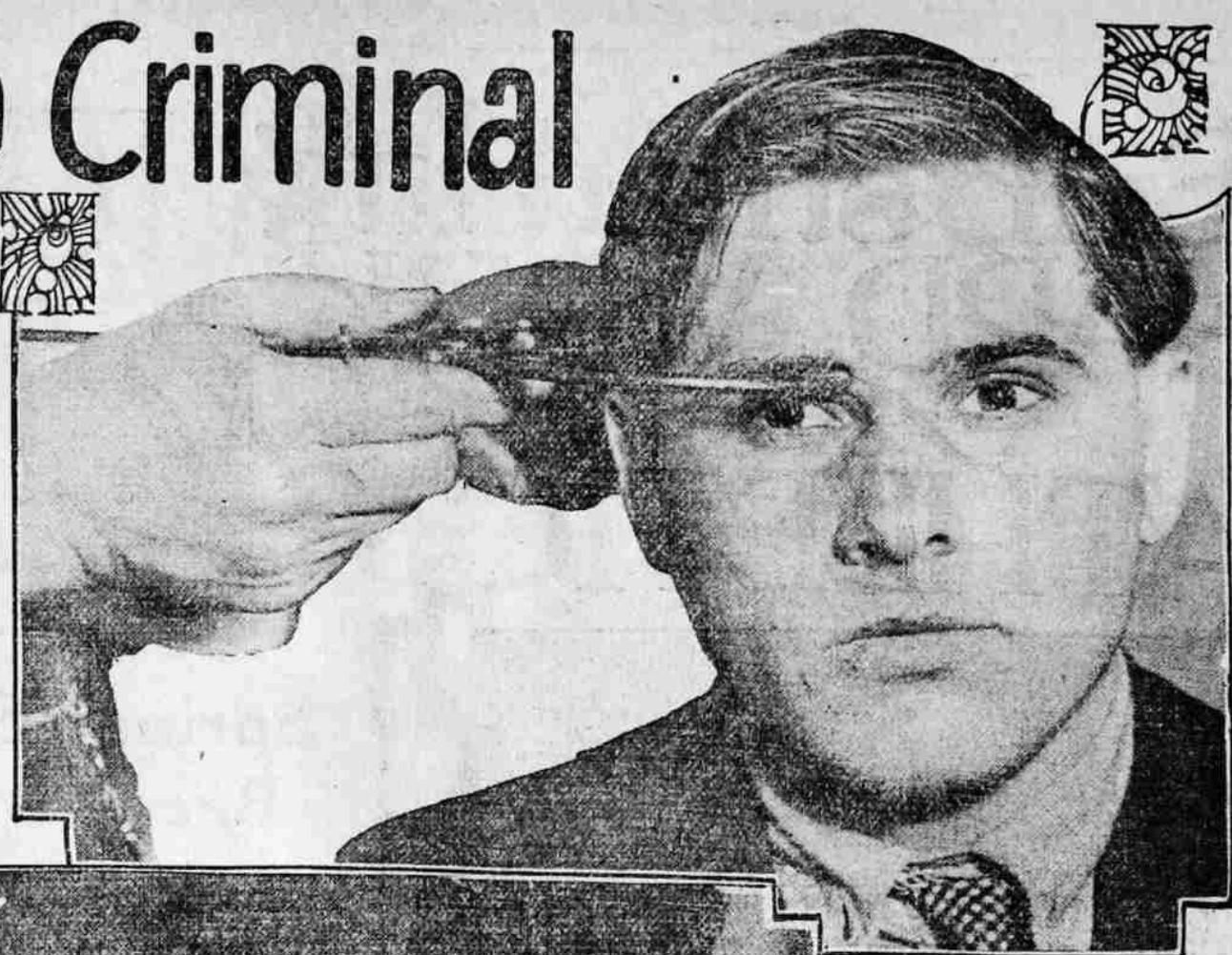
"You must have had an awful time inventing your system," a friend suggested to him one day. "Not half as hard a time as I did to get the world to believe in it," he replied.

Bertillon was a gracious character. Chief of Detectives Samuel E. Allender asserts Bertillon was one of the greatest men of the past century.

"He performed a duty for the world which society should recognize substantially," said Chief Allender.

Once Bertillon was asked to write an article on "The Gentleman Burglar." He wrote the article. So far as the subject was concerned it was brief. "There is no such thing," he wrote.

Bertillon made one mistake in



depressed. Measuring the left foot is done by having the subject stand on a sort of bench, the left foot resting on this and the right foot being raised off the ground, thus allowing all the weight of the body to rest on the left foot. The length

**C**ENTER—Portrait of Alphonse Bertillon. Upper left—Measuring the ear. Upper right—Measuring the depth of head. Above right center—Measuring length of foot. Below, right center—Measuring the height of man sitting. Lower left—Making a photograph. Lower right—Measuring middle finger.

